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POPULATION TRENDS AND PUBLIC POLICY

U.S. Hispanics: Challenging Issues for the 1990s

by Rafael Valdivieso and Cary Davis

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U.S. Hispanics: Challenging Issues for the 1990s

Summary

The number of Hispanics in the United States reached 20 million in 1988, a 34 percent increase since 1980. The growing Hispanic population presents challenges to U.S. policymakers in nearly every area, but most urgently in education, job training, and welfare.

There is considerable diversity within the U.S. Hispanic community, but Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Latinos all share a cultural heritage from a Spanish-speaking country. Hispanics are highly concentrated geographically: 89 percent live in one of nine U.S. states—over one-half in California and Texas alone.

Hispanics are much younger than other Americans with an median age of 26, compared to 32 for non-Hispanics. They also have more children—the Hispanic birth rate is about 50 percent higher than the U.S. average.

The young age structure and relatively high birth rates, along with continued immigration, create considerable momentum for future growth. The Hispanic share of the U.S. population will increase from about 8 percent in 1988 to at least 10 percent by 2000. Because of their younger age structure, Latinos will constitute a greater share of American school children and young job-seekers—almost 16 percent by 2000.

Hispanics have long been a disadvantaged minority, handicapped by low levels of education and ethnic discrimination. The average household income for Hispanics was only two-thirds that of other Americans in 1987. Just over one-quarter of all Latino families in 1987 were below the official poverty level; over one-half of Latino families headed by a single woman were poor.

Most agree that improving the plight of the Hispanic population must begin with the schools—about 40 percent of Latino students dropout before finishing high school. Yet educators and communities disagree about the most effective approach for teaching Hispanics.

The quality of the future U.S. labor market, particularly in southwestern states, will be jeopardized unless Hispanics improve their education and job skills because they will comprise a greater share of the new job-seekers. U.S. businesses are beginning to recognize that they will be employing more Hispanics in the future, and some have instituted programs to help keep Latinos in school and promote job training.

The growing Hispanic population constitutes a burgeoning consumer market sought after by American businesses—increasingly through Spanish-language advertising. Latinos literate in both English and Spanish also provide a competitive advantage to U.S. corporations doing business in Latin America.

The emergence of the Hispanic voter may shift the political priorities in some areas, and have already made Hispanics a major factor in the U.S. presidential races. The reapportionment of congress and redrawing of congressional districts after the 1990 Census may provide a new opportunity for Hispanics to increase their political participation and clout.

As we enter the 1990s, there is little indication that the position of U.S. Hispanics will improve, although some will continue to progress to higher socioeconomic levels. On the contrary, many international and domestic trends point to continuation of the same problems that have plagued Hispanics for the past two decades. These indicators underscore the need for policies and action—by the public and private sectors—to break the cycle of underachievement and poverty that has characterized so many U.S. Hispanics.

The growing recognition that the quality of our future labor force will hinge on improving the education and job skills of young Hispanics and that Hispanics wield increasing political clout probably offer the best incentive for American policymakers to pay attention to Hispanic concerns.

U.S. Hispanics: Challenging Issues for the 1990s

by Rafael Valdivieso and Cary Davis

The number of Hispanic residents in the United States reached 20 million in 1988. After blacks, they are the nation's largest minority. Most Americans know that the number of Hispanics is increasing rapidly, but few really know much about the Hispanic community or appreciate the diversity among Latino groups. Nor do they realize the impact the Hispanic population will have on the nation's schools and labor force in the future.

The very term "Hispanic" is a label with a nebulous meaning, applied by the general population to an ever-changing group of U.S. residents. The terms Hispanic or Latino generally refer to individuals whose cultural heritage traces back to a Spanish-speaking country in Latin America, but also include those persons with links to Spain, or from the southwestern region of the U.S., once under Spanish or Mexican control.[1]

Hispanics are found in every U.S. state, in every type of profession, and may be of any race—but the tendency to generalize about them as a group is fueled by the fact that the majority speak Spanish, live in the Southwest, and occupy the lower end of the social hierarchy.

Many Hispanics face similar problems which—because of their increasing numbers—U.S. policymakers must address. High dropout rates, low salaries, and job discrimination have plagued many Latinos, ensnaring them in a cycle of poverty, alienation, and underachievement. Public policies and programs dealing with education, welfare, and labor relations can help Hispanics lead more productive, independent lives. In addition, because at least one-third of U.S. immigrants in the 1980s are from Latin America, federal immigration laws and enforcement guidelines affect the Hispanic community.

In part because of their geographic concentration, Hispanics have been largely a concern of state politicians in the past, but, increasingly, they are capturing the attention of national politicians, and have become a "factor" in presidential elections. As we enter the 21st century, Hispanics will comprise a greater and greater share of our schoolchildren and labor force. The future promises many changes for Hispanic groups; current policies will help shape the kind of future that Hispanics—and all Americans—can expect.

How Many Hispanics?

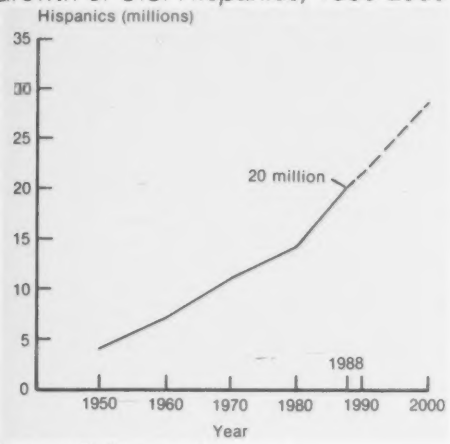
Since the first European settlers arrived in the New World in the 17th century, the composition of the U.S. population has never remained stable for very long. While most of the U.S. population growth has been due to natural increase (the excess of births over deaths) immigration has always been an important component. During the late 1980s, nearly one-third of annual U.S. population increase has been due to immigration.

The Western European settlers to the continental United States were superseded by Northern and then Southern and Eastern Europeans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As the countries of origin for immigration shift over time, with new immigration streams opening while older ones wither away, our self-image as a nation is transformed. This process continues today. In the late 20th century, the "new immigrants" come from Asian, African, and Latin American countries.

Using U.S. Census Bureau definitions, which have evolved over time, the Hispanic population grew from 4 million in 1950, when they were 2.7 percent of the total population, to 14.6 million in 1980, 6.4 percent of the total. In March 1988, there were an estimated 19.4 million U.S. Hispanics, accounting for 8.1 percent of the total U.S. population (see Figure 1). The number of Hispanics increased 34 percent between 1980 and 1988, compared to only a 7 percent increase in the general population.

The key factors responsible for this impressive growth are heavy immigration to the U.S. from Latin America and relatively high birth rates among U.S. Hispanic residents. These two factors contributed equally to the 5 million increase in the

Figure 1:
Growth of U.S. Hispanics, 1950-2000



Source: Reference 1

U.S. Hispanic population between 1980 and 1988.[2]

Hispanic women tend to have more children than other Americans. This is particularly true of recent immigrants, who may be reflecting the larger family size norms of their native countries. The Total Fertility Rate (average lifetime births per woman) for foreign-born Hispanics in 1980 was 2.9, one child greater than the 1.8 rate for non-Hispanics. American-born Hispanics averaged slightly less than Hispanic immigrants with 2.4 children.

Throughout the 1980s, Hispanic birth rates have been about 50 percent higher than for other Americans.[3] The Census Bureau estimates that over 400,000 births to Hispanic women occurred in 1987, accounting for 11 percent of all U.S. births.[4]

Youthful Age Structure

Immigration and high birth rates contribute to the young age structure of Hispanics, relative to the U.S. as a whole. In 1988, the median age in the U.S. was 32.2 years, compared to only 25.5 years of age among Hispanics.

High fertility keeps a population young because of the continuous influx of increasing numbers of births. Immigration also leads to a low average age because migrants are likely to be young adults, just entering the ages for starting a family.

What is the significance of a young age structure? From a public policy perspective, a young population will require day care, education, and jobs, for example, rather than pensions, retirement planning, and geriatric health care. To the extent that Hispanic and non-Hispanic populations differ in age structure, there may be conflicting priorities for public and private spending.

From a strictly demographic perspective, the Hispanics' young age structure means that Latino youth form a greater proportion of U.S. young people. Latinos accounted for 8 percent of the total U.S. population in 1988, but 11 percent of those under age 15. Society's effort to educate and nurture the next generation will be directed increasingly at an Hispanic audience.

The young age structure also contains a built-in momentum for further growth because a greater percentage of the population has yet to reach childbearing age. Even without additional immigration the Hispanics would grow relative to non-Hispanics. With high fertility and low mortality rates, Hispanics contribute an increasing proportion of the natural increase of the U.S. population.

International immigration is the second major factor in the remarkable growth of the Hispanic population. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) recorded 2.7 million Latin American immigrants to the U.S. between 1960 and 1970, and many have remained here. (Puerto Ricans, who are U.S. citizens, are not included in this count.) According to Census Bureau estimates, a net figure of ove. 2 million Hispanic immigrants

High birth rates and immigration create a young age structure for U.S. Hispanics.

(including undocumented) entered between 1980 and 1988.

The immigration of Latinos to the U.S. is expected to remain high for the foreseeable future. In many sending countries in Latin America, the high international debt and economic disarray combined with an unprecedented number of new job seekers guarantees a growing pool of potential migrants. Continuing political unrest in countries such as El Salvador and Nicaragua will augment the flow. No provision in existing INS regulations or in recently proposed legislation is likely to seriously slow the flow of Hispanics into the U.S.

Stark Contrasts: Hispanic Population Groups

The growing Hispanic presence in the U.S. has blinded many Americans to the real diversity that exists within this community. The categories of "Hispanics" used by the Census Bureau largely reflect the countries of origin for recent migration streams: Mexicans; Puerto Ricans; Cubans; Central and South Americans; along with the catchall "Other Hispanics" (see Figure 2).

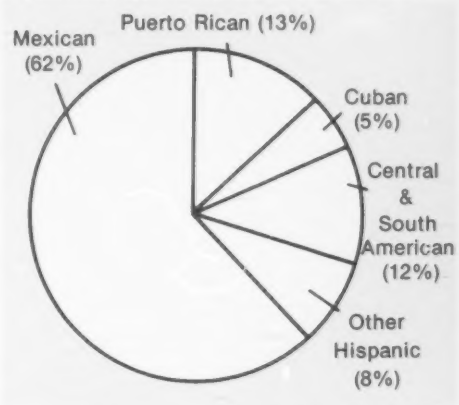
Latinos of Mexican ancestry have long been the largest U.S. group covered by the umbrella term Hispanic. In 1988, Mexicans accounted for 62 percent of all Hispanic Americans. About 13 percent of U.S. mainland Hispanics were Puerto Rican in 1988; 5 percent were Cuban; 12 percent Central and South American; and 8 percent "Other Hispanic." Except for the "Other" category, all the groups have made their major numerical impact on the U.S. since World War II.

The point of entry for each Hispanic group has largely determined its current geographic distribution. Mexican Americans are concentrated in the Southwest, particularly in California and Texas. In 1980, only about one-quarter of them were foreign-born, underscoring the fact that they are among the oldest Hispanic groups residing in the United States.

Puerto Ricans, the second largest subgroup, are clustered heavily in the New York metropolitan area. Waves of Puerto Ricans entered the U.S. when inexpensive air traffic opened up between Puerto Rico and New York in the 1950s. As natives of a U.S. Commonwealth, Puerto Ricans may enter or leave the U.S. mainland at will. In 1980, about one-half of those residing on the U.S. mainland had been born on the island of Puerto Rico.

The Cuban migration stream has flowed primarily into Florida, the point of entry for Cuban refugees fleeing the Fidel Castro regime in the 1950s and 1960s. Remarkably, Dade County, Florida, still contains about one-half of the 1 million Cuban Americans. According to the 1980 Census, three-fourths of U.S. Cubans were foreign-born. However, this number does not reflect the influx of 125,000 Cuban refugees during the 1980 Mariel Sealift.

Figure 2:
Hispanic population groups, 1988



Total number of Hispanics = 20 million

Source: Reference 2

The Central and South Americans are among the most recent of the major immigrant streams. In 1980, about 80 percent were foreign-born. The majority live in California, a favorite entry point, but large communities also exist in large eastern urban areas. New York contains sizable communities of Dominicans and Colombians, for example, and many Central Americans have flocked to the Boston and Washington, D.C. metropolitan areas.

"Other Hispanics" are heavily concentrated in the Southwest, particularly New Mexico and Arizona. The group includes some Americans who immigrated recently from Spain, and others who came centuries ago. Many are from families that have been here so many generations they no longer identify themselves with Spain or a specific Latin American country but still consider themselves to be "of Hispanic origin." The vast majority (80 percent) were born in the U.S., according to 1980 Census figures.

Although Latinos reside in every state, 89 percent live in one of nine states, five of these in the Southwest. Because most immigrants enter the U.S. through California or Texas, the Hispanic

presence in these states has grown. More than one-half of U.S. Hispanics live in California and Texas; another 8 percent live in the neighboring states of Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. Over 14 percent of all Hispanics reside in New York and New Jersey, 8 percent in Florida, and 4 percent in Illinois (see Figure 3). Only 11 percent of the total live in the other 41 states.

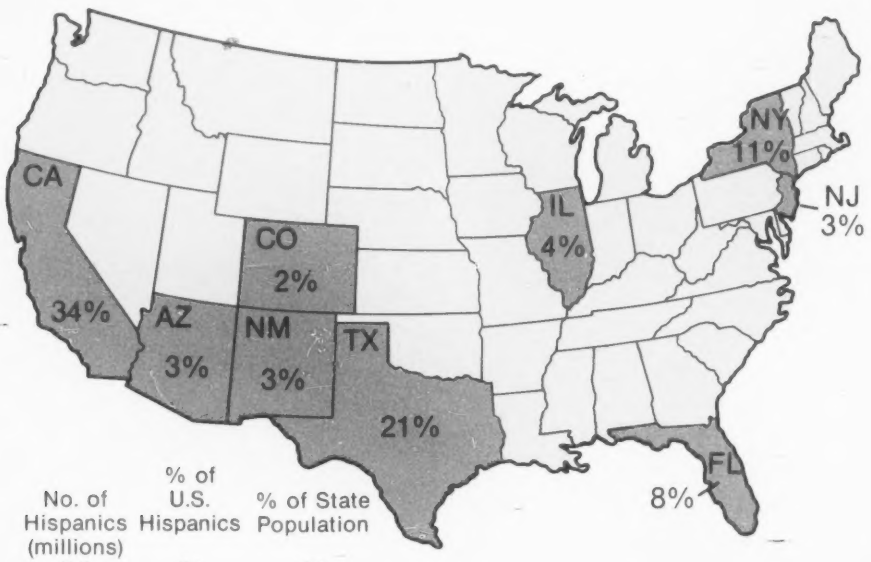
Disadvantaged Minority

Latinos have many characteristics that set them apart from other Americans, but which are also common to other disadvantaged minorities and to earlier immigrant groups. In general, Hispanics have less education, lower incomes, and higher rates of unemployment and poverty than the general population. They have been painted with a broad brush of ethnic stereotyping—hated for their differences and feared because of their growing presence.

Because many Hispanics have darker skin than the average non-Hispanic, and because most speak Spanish, they are an easy target for discrimination. Public concern and misinformation about illegal immigration has tarnished the image of all Hispanics because most illegals are from Latin America. Many blame Hispanics for the flow of illegal drugs from Latin America.

Hispanics have faced discrimination in schools and housing, and in obtaining jobs and promotions. They have suffered harassment by police and been discouraged from political participation. Many earlier immigrant groups suffered from simi-

Figure 3:
Distribution of U.S. Hispanics by state, 1988



	No. of Hispanics (millions)	% of U.S. Hispanics	% of State Population
Calif.	6.6	34	23
Texas	4.1	21	24
N. York	2.1	11	12
Florida	1.5	8	12
Illinois	0.8	4	7
Arizona	0.6	3	18
N. Jersey	0.6	3	8
N. Mexico	0.5	3	35
Colo.	0.4	2	11

States with
350,000 or more Hispanics: 89% of U.S. Hispanics
Less than 350,000 Hispanics: 11% of U.S. Hispanics (including Alaska and Hawaii not shown)

Source: Reference 2

Many Hispanics lack the education and skills needed to hold high-status jobs.

lar injustices. However, in part because substantial immigration from Latin America is still occurring, Hispanics continue to experience ethnic discrimination.

Slow Educational Progress

Low educational achievement has been a major barrier to the advancement of Hispanics in U.S. society. Hispanics have made modest gains in educational attainment since 1970, yet education still stands out as one of the quality-of-life indicators most at odds with the non-Hispanic population. More than 3 out of 5 (62 percent) Latinos age 25 to 34 had completed four years of high school by March 1988, but a much higher proportion (89 percent) of non-Hispanics had completed high school (see Figure 4).

Although good schools can break the cycle, research consistently shows that the success of children in school can usually be predicted from the educational status of their parents. The Latino adults most likely to have school-age children are in the 25-to-34 age bracket. In 1988, this group was over three times as likely to have not completed high school as other Americans.

Some U.S. Latino groups are more likely than others to have high school diplomas. In 1988, nearly 83 percent of Cuban Americans age 25 to 34 had completed high school compared to only 67 percent of Puerto Ricans and 54 percent of Mexican Americans.

Only 12 percent of Hispanics in the 25-to-34 age bracket had completed four or more years of college, less than half the percentage of non-Hispanics. The range within Hispanic groups is even more striking, from a low of 8 percent of Mexican Americans to a high of 24 percent of Cuban Americans with four or more years of college.

Although many Hispanic students are handicapped by a limited knowledge of English, this alone does not explain poor academic performance. Among Hispanics, Cuban students are the most likely to speak Spanish at home, yet have the highest educational levels. Clearly, for these students the benefits of the middle class, professional background of the majority of U.S. Cuban parents outweigh the "disadvantage" of having to learn English as a second language.

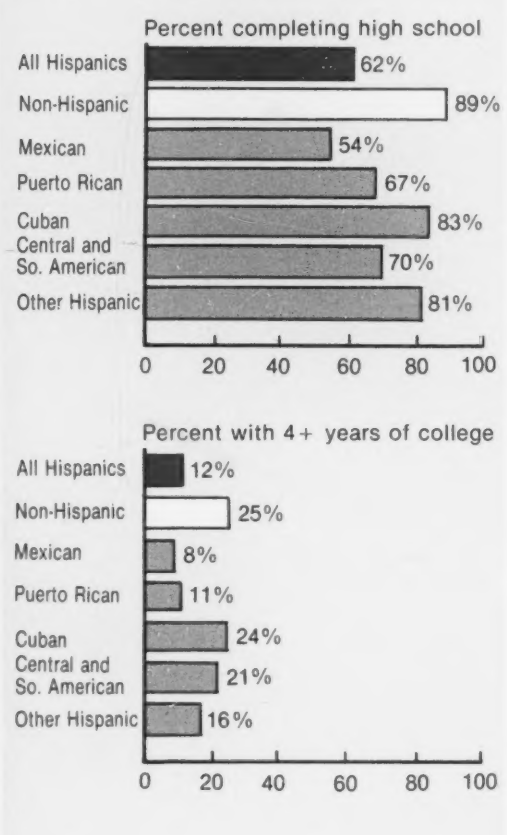
While college attendance is crucial for overall advancement of Hispanics, increasing the percentage who finish high school is a necessary first step. The high dropout rate not only hurts Hispanics, it constitutes a massive waste of human re-

sources sorely needed in this era of keen international economic competition. Moreover, because educational attainment is strongly associated with social and economic status, the high dropout rate is certain to contribute to Latino poverty in the future.

Low-Paying Jobs

In 1988, Hispanics made up only 7 percent of the U.S. civilian labor force. The Hispanic share, however, is likely to increase as the non-Hispanic population ages and the number of working-age Hispanics continues to grow.

Figure 4:
Educational level by Hispanic ethnic group, 1988: age 25 to 34



Source: Reference 3

Hispanic men, in fact, are more likely to be employed or seeking work than other American men, 79 percent versus 74 percent, although only about 71 percent of Puerto Rican and Other Hispanic males are in the labor force.

Hispanic women, and Puerto Ricans in particular, are less likely to be working than other women. Only 51 percent of female Hispanics, and 40 percent of Puerto Rican women, were in the labor force in 1988 compared to 56 percent of non-Hispanic women. Some observers feel that this difference reflects the traditional Latin American disapproval of women working outside the home. However, this gap may be closing: The percentage of younger Hispanic women who are working exceeds that of young non-Hispanics.

Because of their relatively low educational levels and language problems, Hispanics tend to enter poorly-paid jobs with little chance of advancement. In 1988, only 28 percent of Hispanic men were in the upper-level managerial, technical, and administrative categories compared to 48 percent of non-Hispanic men. Cuban men are an exception to this; 51 percent held higher-status positions.

Not only are Hispanics overrepresented in low-paying, semi-skilled jobs but they work in economic sectors vulnerable to cyclical unemployment and in some industries, like manufacturing, that are threatened with a long-term decline. Hispanics are as likely as non-Hispanics to be in the labor force, yet they are more likely to be unemployed. In 1988, 8.5 percent of Hispanics were out of work compared to only 5.8 percent of other Americans.

High Poverty Rates

The low-status occupations and high unemployment among Hispanics translate into low incomes and high poverty rates. Median family income for Hispanics in 1987 was only $20,300, two-thirds of the non-Hispanic median income of $31,600. In real dollars, this income gap between Hispanics and other Americans actually grew between 1978 and 1987, primarily because Hispanics still have not recovered from the economic recession of 1980 and 1981.

Within the Hispanic community, income levels reveal marked differences. Cuban family income in 1987, at $27,300, approached the non-Hispanic median. Puerto Rican families, at the other extreme, had average annual incomes of only $15,200, one-half of the non-Hispanic median and more than $5,000 less than the next highest Hispanic group.

Since Hispanic families are relatively large, these incomes must support more household members. The average family size for non-Hispanics in 1988 was 3.1, compared to 3.8 for all Hispanics and 4.1 persons for Mexican Americans.

Also, Hispanic families are less likely than others to be headed by a married couple and much more likely to be headed by a single parent, usually the mother. Consequently, fewer Hispanic families have the potential earning power provided by two working parents. Married-couple families account for only 70 percent of all Hispanic families, compared to 80 percent of non-Hispanic families. Nearly one-quarter, 23 percent, are headed by an unmarried or separated woman, while 16 percent of non-Hispanic families are female-headed. A whopping 44 percent of Puerto Rican families are headed by single females, double the Hispanic and almost triple the non-Hispanic average.

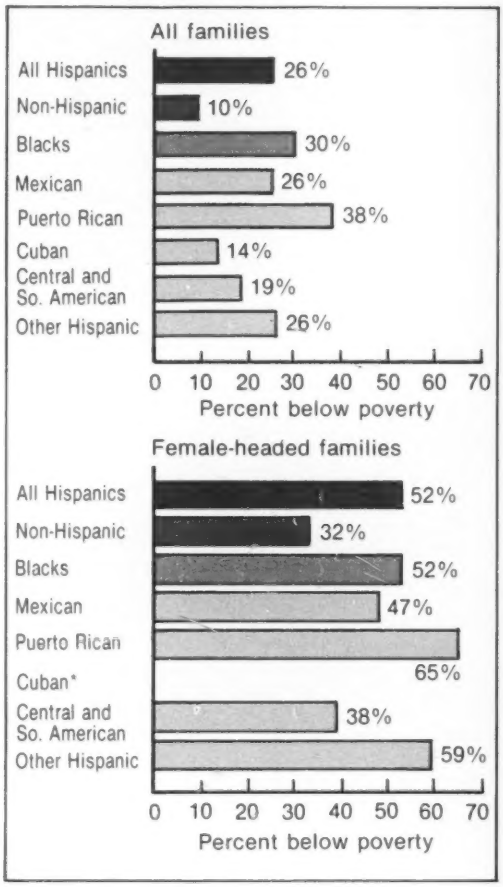
These statistics highlight the handicaps faced by many Latino children. With large families, low incomes, and a high proportion of single-parent families, the success of a significant proportion of the next generation is at risk. In 1987, 26 percent of all Hispanic families had incomes below the poverty threshold, compared to only 10 percent of non-Hispanic families. In single-parent families headed by an Hispanic female, over half (52 percent) were below the poverty line, exactly equal to the proportion of black families headed by a single female in poverty (see Figure 5).

Within Hispanic groups, poverty rates range from a high of 38 percent for Puerto Rican families to a low of 14 percent for Cuban. Perhaps most discouraging, two-thirds of female-headed Puerto Rican families were poor in 1987.

Poverty rates for Hispanics actually increased between 1978 and 1987, while rates for white and black Americans have decreased. The number of poor Hispanics grew from 2.9 million in 1979 to 5.5 million in 1987, a 90 percent increase.

Poor Hispanics are less likely to benefit from federal welfare programs than poor black Americans, but more likely than non-Hispanic whites. The percentage of poor Hispanics served by federal welfare programs fell slightly between 1980 and 1988, partly as a result of federal budget cuts. The only major program that reaches a majority of poor Hispanics is the subsidized school lunch program, received by 92 percent of poor Hispanic children in 1988. In the same year, only 30 percent of poor Hispanics received cash assistance; 13 percent lived in public housing; 49 percent received food stamps; and 42 percent received Medicaid (see Table 1).

Figure 5:
U.S. families below poverty by race or ethnic group, 1987



*insufficient cases

Source: Reference 3

High poverty rates are likely to persist among Hispanics in the 1990s. Actions to curb the high poverty levels must deal primarily with:

- Education and job training;
- Discrimination in hiring and promotion; and
- Access to welfare programs by the Hispanic poor, especially single-parent families.

Each of these issues requires the attention of policymakers and community leaders from the national to the local level.

Spanish Language—A Common Bond

According to the 1980 Census, approximately 10.5 million U.S. Hispanics spoke Spanish regularly at home. Reflecting the size of this population, the number of Spanish-language radio stations grew from 60 to 200 between 1970 and 1980; Spanish language newspapers from 40 to 65; and Spanish television stations from 12 to 167.[5]

Most of these Spanish-speakers were also fluent in English. A study of 1976 data by sociologist Calvin Veltman found that approximately 43 percent of the Spanish-speakers relied on Spanish predominantly; the remainder preferred English. Also in 1976, over 3 million persons of Hispanic ancestry did not speak Spanish at all.[6]

Veltman projected that the number of Spanish-speaking Americans, including those bilingual in Spanish and English, will reach 16 to 18 million by the year 2001. At least half the growth will occur in just two metropolitan areas: New York and Los Angeles. The Spanish-speaking population in these two cities could reach 2.5 to 3.0 million by 2001, and approach 1 million in the cities of San Antonio, Chicago, and Miami. By 2001, however, an additional 4.4 million U.S. residents of Hispanic ancestry may abandon Spanish altogether and speak only English.

The maintenance of Spanish language use depends to some extent on the continuation of Hispanic immigration. Any interruption in the immigrant stream would stabilize the size of the Spanish-speaking population for approximately 15 years, after which a progressively more rapid decline would set in.

Use of English by Latinos depends in part upon whether they are foreign or native-born, and, for the native-born, how far removed they are from the immigrant generation. The preference for English or Spanish also depends on one's job, neighborhood, and life-style. Some 75 percent of all Hispanic immigrants speak English on a daily basis by the time they have been in the country for 15 years. More than half the immigrants who arrived in the United States before they were 14 have made English their everyday language, relegating Spanish to the status of a second language.

The U.S.-born children of immigrant parents usually become fluent English speakers. Most retain some knowledge of Spanish as well, because they hear it at home and in their neighborhoods. Their children—second-generation Americans—usually learn English as their first language.

As long as immigration continues, bilingualism may persist longer among Hispanics than it did among other immigrant groups. But immigration does not delay the acquisition of English by the native-born or by the immigrants themselves.

The large Spanish-speaking U.S. population has special needs and presents many challenges to educators, service providers, and policymakers.

Table 1:
Percent of the poor who received benefits from a major welfare program, 1988

	Cash Assistance	Public* Housing	Subsidized** School Lunch	Food Stamps	Medicaid
Hispanics	30	13	92	49	42
Blacks	36	29	94	64	54
Non-Hispanic Whites	17	10	76	36	34
Hispanics receiving benefit (in millions)	1.6	0.5	3.1	2.7	2.3

*for renters only
**for households with children age 5 to 17

Source: Reference 4

A Cuban American talk show hostess broadcasts in Spanish and English on 31 TV stations.

However, it has also created a burgeoning consumer market for American businesses and a unique resource for U.S. corporations involved in Latin America.

Bilingual Public Services

Although immigrants learn English fairly rapidly, both they and the public benefit from the provision of basic emergency and other public services, election information, and important announcements in both Spanish and English. There is also a large unmet need for English classes for adults. There are long lists of adult Hispanics in a number of cities, notably Los Angeles and New York, waiting to enroll in English classes.

Failure to provide such services blocks rather than hastens the adaptation of non-English or limited English speakers and impedes their ability to participate in, and contribute to, society. The newly-arrived who are welcomed in their own language are likely to accustom themselves more rapidly to American ways and language.

The provision of Spanish-language services and announcements has raised concerns among some Americans. Some oppose the expenditure of public funds on Spanish literature, and strongly feel that the immigrants should adapt to the English-dominated society they chose to live in. In 1988, the residents of Florida, Colorado, and Arizona voted to declare English their state's official language, raising the number of states that have adopted such "official English" laws to 17.

Spanish in U.S. Schools

Immigrant children, as well as the U.S.-born children of immigrant parents, enter school speaking Spanish. Educators are seeking ways to deal with these children—as they are with the many non-Hispanic immigrants entering public schools. Research has shown that both immigrants and their children adapt very rapidly to English, and even prefer it to Spanish over time. Educators, however, have disagreed about the most effective way to educate students who do not speak English fluently.

The most common approaches to educating a non-English speaking student range from the "total immersion" of the student in a regular classroom to extra tutoring or special English classes to academic classes taught in the student's first language. In 1984, only about 25 percent of Hispanic fourth graders who needed language assistance were enrolled in special programs to learn English and basic skills.[7] Language problems often result in grade retention: About 25 percent of Hispanic school children are two years over age for their grade when they enter high school.[8] Poor academic performance and being older than one's classmates lead many to leave school. In the 1980s, about 40 percent of Hispanic high school sophomores nationwide could be expected to dropout before graduation; typically, another 25 percent would squeak by with below C grade averages.

Many Latino groups favor the bilingual education approach because students take academic subjects in Spanish at the same time they are learning English. Some critics charge that such programs slow the learning of English by students who must eventually function in an English-speaking society. Others fear this will lead to a bilingual society or will create a Spanish-speaking region within the United States, much like the French-speaking Canadian province, Quebec.

Opinions have been divided at the federal level as well. In 1985, Secretary of Education William Bennett placed part of the blame for high Hispanic dropout rates on bilingual education programs. However, an independent Government Accounting Office study found evidence these programs had been an effective educational approach.[9]

The Future Labor Force

Hispanics will soon become the majority of entry-level workers in some metropolitan areas. In San Antonio, Hispanics may already comprise the majority of new workers, and it is likely that most new job seekers in Los Angeles will be Hispanic by the

year 2000. Their lack of educational preparedness is of increasing concern to business, industry, and government, particularly in light of the structural changes in the economy that require higher skills for entry-level employment. The manufacturing and manual labor jobs that historically were filled by immigrants are disappearing. The growing mismatch between the skills new jobs require and the skills Hispanics acquire calls for increased education and cooperation between the private sector and the educational and job training establishments.

American businesses are beginning to realize that Hispanics will constitute a growing proportion of the workers as the U.S. labor force ages. The median age of U.S. workers will rise from 35 in 1984 to 39 by the year 2000. The relatively young Hispanic population will account for 22 percent of the growth in the labor force. However, Hispanics are overrepresented in the lower-skilled jobs that are expected to decline in coming years, and underrepresented in service sector occupations that demand more education.[10] If the current occupational profile of Hispanics is maintained, they would occupy only 5 percent of the jobs in the year 2000, suggesting that the kinds of jobs Latinos hold will likely change during the 1990s.

Hispanics could fill a need by both business and government for literate English/Spanish bilingual professionals in international trade and diplomacy. There will be over 300 million Spanish-speaking consumers in Latin America by the turn of the century. The United States could benefit from a conscious effort by educators to foster a pool of literate bilingual English/Spanish speakers. Yet data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that, in 1982, only 4.4 percent of Hispanic high school seniors had taken three or more years of Spanish, the minimum necessary to be able to write properly in a language.[11]

Many companies involved in foreign markets recognize that English/Spanish bilingual professionals provide a competitive advantage. Lodwrick Cook, Chairman of Atlantic Richfield Company, has stated, "it would serve us well to start taking a strategic view of our unique Hispanic resource in the USA."[12] Several banks and other corporations in Miami already hire executives who speak Spanish to carry out business not only with international customers but with the members of the Cuban community there.[13]

The Hispanic Market

The corporate world's strategic interest in Latinos as consumers and as employees could improve

In the 1980s, about 40 percent of Hispanics drop out of school before graduation.

Hispanics constitute a $130 billion consumer market that is relatively untapped.

the circumstances of many Latinos. Recognizing that Latinos will become the majority of the labor force in many areas, some corporations have launched programs to improve the status of Hispanic and other students, ranging from "adopt-a-school" programs to agreements promising jobs to high school graduates in exchange for improved school systems.

Corporations also see Latinos as an emerging consumer group. Hispanics already make up a $130 billion market that is relatively untapped. A recent article in *Business Week* explained, "Some Hispanics are just beginning to enjoy affluence, and many recent immigrants are experiencing American consumer culture for the first time."[14] Advertisers are targeting the Hispanic market through Spanish-language television, radio, and print media along with more traditional means.

The Political Voice of Hispanics

The 1988 presidential campaign marks the first national election in which the Hispanic vote has been openly courted, complete with the first-ever Spanish-language advertisements and the first discussion of Hispanic issues by candidates on Spanish-language television. Admittedly, Hispanic issues have yet to surface on the national agenda of either party, but the increasing number, and more importantly, the growing political participation of Hispanics may change that in the future.

The number of Latinos registered to vote, estimated at 4.5 to 5.0 million, is modest compared to other major national groups or to its own population base of nearly 20 million. Only about 36 percent of the Hispanics of voting age registered to vote, while about 65 percent of black and white Americans registered in 1986. However, about one-third of Hispanics are ineligible to vote because they are not citizens. Of those Latinos eligible to vote, 54 percent were registered in 1986.

Successful voter registration drives in recent years have narrowed the gap between Hispanics and other Americans. One organization in particular is responsible for the registration of at least 1 million voters—the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, founded by the late Willie Velasquez.

Once Hispanics do register, they are nearly as likely to vote in any given election as other Americans.[15] An estimated 60 percent of registered Hispanics voted in the 1988 presidential election.

The concentration of Hispanics in a few key states makes it unwise for any aspiring national politician to ignore the Hispanic vote. Six states with the largest Hispanic populations—Texas, California, Florida, New York, Illinois and New Jersey—accounted for 173 of the 270 electoral votes needed to win the national election in 1988. Because of the general U.S. population shift to the South and Southwest, these states will account for even more electoral votes by the 1992 presidential election.

The relatively large proportion of Hispanics who are not U.S. citizens has dampened the political strength of Latinos in these key states. Because of heavy immigration, the non-citizen share of the Hispanic population has been growing faster than the native-born portion since 1980. In 1986, about 43 percent of all voting-age Hispanics in Florida were not citizens; 17 percent in Texas. According to one estimate, one-half of California's Hispanics were not citizens in 1986. Latinos constituted 19 percent of all Californian adults, but only 11 percent of the state's citizens in 1986.

While diversity exists between and within the different Latino groups, the majority of Hispanics identify with the Democratic party; less than 10 percent identify themselves as Republicans and about 20 percent as Independents.[16] However, like other Americans, they increasingly support candidates on the basis of issues and personality rather than party affiliation. Their political views can often be traced to their national origin and history. Cubans, for example, many of whom came to the U.S. fleeing a Communist regime, tend to be more conservative than other Hispanics.

Republicans have made inroads among Hispanics in the 1980s, gaining votes and recruiting His-

panics as candidates. In 1980, Ronald Reagan received 25 percent of the national Hispanic vote and in 1984, captured 59 percent of Florida's Hispanic vote. George Bush received an estimated 30 percent of the national Hispanic vote in 1988.

According to Univision, a Spanish-language TV network, Cuban Americans make up 53 percent of all registered Republicans in the Miami area, and 8 percent of Florida's Republican voters. However in Texas, Hispanics, mostly Mexican American, account for about 25 percent of the Democratic vote. An estimated 75 percent of Hispanic Texans voted for the Democratic presidential candidate in 1988.

Hispanic Elected Officials

Between 1974 and 1988, the number of Hispanic elected officials more than doubled from 1,500 to over 3,300 nationwide. The increase is due not only to Latino population growth and to voter registration drives, but also to the efforts of the Southwest Voter Registration Project (SVRP), the Mexican American and Puerto Rican Legal Defense Funds, and other organizations. These groups have also helped dismantle discriminatory practices such as at-large election systems and "gerrymandered" political district boundaries that had blocked the efforts of Hispanics to elect their own representatives. The SVRP alone has launched successful lawsuits in at least 88 political jurisdictions across the Southwest to ensure more equal Hispanic representation in congressional districts.

U.S. Representative Bill Richardson (D., New Mexico) is 1 of 10 Hispanic Congressmen.

Of the 535 voting members of Congress in 1989, 10 are Hispanic—all in the House. While this is a substantial increase over previous decades, the number is still far short of the 37 or so that would be representative of the Hispanic portion of the voting-age population.

While New Mexico and Arizona have had Hispanic governors in the past, Florida is the only state led by an Hispanic governor in 1988—Republican Robert Martinez. Three major U.S. cities —San Antonio, Denver, and Miami—have Hispanic mayors in 1988, as do 15 other cities with populations exceeding 30,000.

Impact of the 1990 Census

One of the principal uses of the 1990 Census will be the reapportionment of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. The 1990 reapportionment, like the 1980 adjustment, is expected to result in the loss of House seats for several Midwestern and Northeastern states, but a gain for several states in the South and West. The biggest gainers are projected to be Florida with 3 new seats for a total of 22, Texas with 4 for a total of 31, and California with 5 new seats for a whopping total of 50 seats.[17] In 1980, these three states contained 8.4 million Hispanics or 57 percent of the national Hispanic population. Over 13 million can be projected for the three states together by 1990, nearly two-thirds of all Hispanics.

The results of the 1990 Census could offer some surprises about the number of U.S. Hispanics, just as the 1980 Census did. The 1980 Census counted about 1 million more Hispanics than had been estimated previously. This may happen again in 1990, although intercensal estimates of Hispanics have improved since 1970.

Hispanics are more likely to be missed by the census than non-Hispanics. In the 1980 Census, between 3 and 6 percent of the Hispanics were missed, compared to only about 1 percent of the general population.

Changing Political Fortunes

Hispanic leaders see enormous potential for increasing their political clout in the 1990s. However, several factors threaten to block their

progress, including the undercounting of minorities in the 1990 Census—which could affect the reapportionment process. Other problems include the high poverty rates, poor English, and low educational levels of Hispanics—all related to low voter registration and turnout. The young age structure of Latinos hinders their political leverage because a large share of young adults tend not to vote. Finally, the low rate of naturalization, especially among Mexican immigrants, means that many long-time U.S. residents are not citizens.

On the other hand, several developments give grounds for cautious optimism that Hispanics will increase their political participation in the 1990s. These developments include the following:

- The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) has been conducting a campaign to encourage Hispanic legal residents to become citizens. The pending legalization and naturalization of perhaps 2 million undocumented Latinos under the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) will be a source of new Hispanic voters.
- Two 1986 Supreme Court decisions, *Thornberg* v. *Gingles* and *Davis* v. *Bandemer*, gave minorities a better legal precedent for changing certain at-large election districts to single-member districts, and for eliminating political gerrymandering during the 1990 redistricting process. This will enhance Hispanic political strength.
- The advent of two national Spanish-language networks, Univision and Telemundo, will provide a window for Spanish-speaking Latinos to follow political developments as well as an effective way for candidates to reach Latinos.
- A new generation of Hispanic women is more involved in politics. Today's younger Latinas register and vote at higher rates than their male counterparts.

U.S. Hispanics in the 1990s

The 1990 Census results will tell us a great deal about the changes that have occurred among Hispanics during the 1980s, but several broad trends that will shape the U.S. Latino population in the 1990s are already clear.

The Hispanic population will continue to grow more rapidly than the U.S. population as a whole over the next decade. The growth will be fueled by a relatively young age structure, higher fertility rates, and immigration. Recent projections show an Hispanic population of 21 million in 1990 and nearly 29 million by the year 2000. At the turn of the century, Hispanics will comprise just over 10 percent of the projected U.S. population, and about 16 percent of both the school-age children and of those 18-to-24 years old, the age group entering the labor force and military service (see Figure 6).

However, the growth of the Latino population will not be spread evenly among all groups. Cubans, for example, are likely to decline as a share of all Hispanics because immigration from Cuba has virtually ceased. Also, this group has a relatively low fertility rate. Because Cubans have the highest socioeconomic standing among Hispanic groups, their relative decrease may lower average measures of Latino socioeconomic status. Recent immigration trends suggest that Central Americans will become an increasing proportion of the U.S. Hispanic population over the next decade.

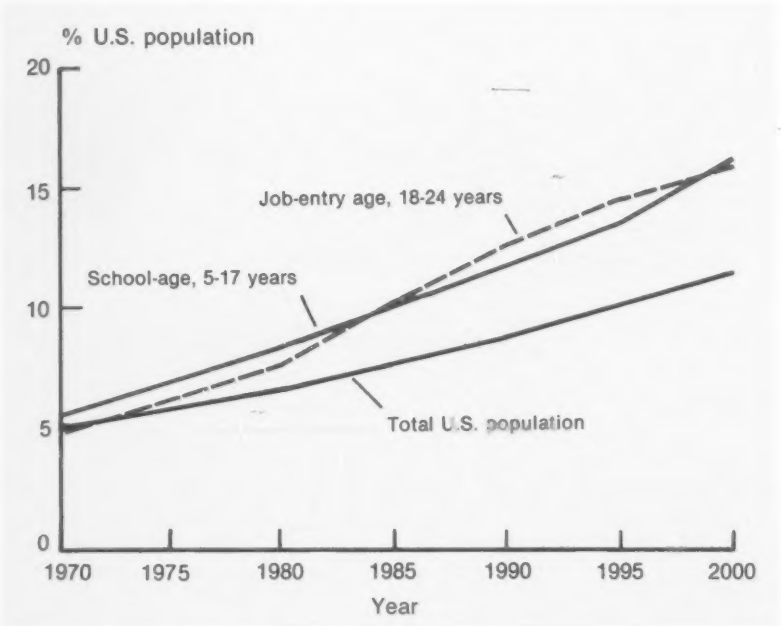
The size and composition of the U.S. Hispanic population will be shaped by both internal and external events and policies. The extraordinary population growth in Latin America has created socioeconomic pressures which will push more people toward the United States. Spanish-speaking countries are forecast to add 69 million people between 1988 and 2000. But the greatest strains are from the population already born, those who will reach working age in the next 20 years. As one example, there are not enough jobs for the 1 million new entrants to Mexico's labor force each year. One-half of the Mexican labor force may be seriously under- or unemployed by the year 2000, creating a tremendous incentive for emigration to the U.S.

A large percentage of Latino immigrants and refugees entering the U.S. have little education and few job skills. However, a greater share of the better educated, middle- and upper-class residents of Latin American countries may begin to immigrate to the U.S. if the political instability and economic problems worsen. Some recently introduced immigration legislation suggests that the U.S. may be more receptive to these wealthier immigrants in the 1990s.

Several social, demographic, and economic trends within the U.S. may also encourage the immigration of more Latinos. The proposed Simpson-Kennedy Immigration bill would expand the percentage of immigrants who enter the country for work-related reasons, and limit those entering under family reunification provisions. This legislation may reflect the thinking about immigration policy that will dominate the 1990s.

After two decades of low fertility, the U.S. may begin to experience labor shortages during the

Figure 6:
Hispanics as a percentage of U.S. population, selected age groups, 1970-2000



Source: Reference 5

1990s because fewer young Americans will be entering the labor force. This may increase pressure on the Congress to allow more immigrant workers into the U.S. on a temporary or permanent basis.

The impact of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act is still uncertain. The amnesty portion of the legislation will legalize the status of nearly 3 million people, a majority of whom are Hispanic. However, the extent to which employer sanctions for hiring illegal aliens—the "teeth" of the 1986 law—can stem the flow of illegal immigrants remains unclear.

U.S. foreign policy may also play a role in the size of the immigration flow. If the U.S. can help the countries of Latin America promote balanced economic growth and slow inflation, there may be less pressure to absorb some of their workers into the U.S. economy.

While there will undoubtedly be significant variation among Hispanic groups, they will continue to become a more potent force in politics and business, particularly in states like California, Texas, Florida, and New York. As long as much of the growth in the Latino population is fueled by the immigration of refugees and unskilled workers, the overall socioeconomic status of Latinos will remain low. However, this may mask the significant upward mobility of many earlier Hispanic immigrants who have already entered mainstream American society.

As we enter the 1990s, U.S. Hispanics constitute an increasing share of our school children and entry-level job seekers; yet they remain a disadvantaged minority. The Latinos' growing presence suggests that policymakers should seek ways to:

- Ease their transition into mainstream society;
- Ensure their maximum productivity through improved education and training; and
- Encourage their participation in the decision-making and political processes.

Perhaps the recognition that improving the position of Hispanics is in the best interest of all Americans offers policymakers the best incentive to focus more attention on Hispanic concerns.

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